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— No one is pleased with what he *has*,
Yet none displeased with what he *is*.

CONGREVE.

INCONSISTENCY of character is as old a charge upon man, as his very existence on the earth. The wisest and the best of men have not been free from this feature of fallen nature; but all have been compelled to confess, that the noblest resolutions have been tinctured with want of perseverance, that the brightest lives of virtue have bowed before the inroads of sin, that the most firm & steady characters have at times deviated from their course with

strange and unaccountable inconsistency of view, feeling, & conduct. However humiliating to reflection, it can nevertheless not even admit of a doubt that such is the case. The nature which his fall bestowed upon man doomed him to possess such a trait in his character, so long as mortality and sin should reign over his race. So long as he is exposed to the trials, the sorrows, the suffering, the temptations attendant on a state of sin and of probation, he can never expect to attain that consistency of character, which is one of the peculiar prerogatives, judging by analogy, of the inhabitants of heaven.

Wherever we look on the broad & ever varying ocean of human society, we behold a confirmation of the above remarks. The turbulent history of nations as well as of individuals is full of irresistible evidence. Else, why should we have

occasion to lament the overthrow of empire, the extinction of nations illustrious for their worth, their valor, and their learning? Had man been a consistent being, the hand of time would have been arrested in its destroying progress; the improvements of society would never have been lost; the tide of experience would have flowed boldly on, acquiring amplitude as it advanced, instead of, as now, being broken into scattered streams, and at the best, ~~affording~~ affording but an uncertain benefit to men. Had man been a consistent being, the warrior had never lived, nor the trump of martial fame been sounded. Egypt, that dark and mysterious wonder of modern intellect, had survived to tell her own history; the events we ourselves have witnessed in the present generation of mankind, would never have occurred.

But why need we dwell upon remarks so familiar to every mind of the least observation? — Why need we hold up the humiliating picture of human inconsistency to public inspection, when every heart writhes beneath the conviction of its reality? If there is a voice where pervades human nature; if there is a whisper that makes every exertion in some degree less ardent than it might otherwise have been; — it is that sad and monitory warning which says to humanity, "Remember thy inconsistency." Individual experience will tell more ~~to~~ in a single hour, than years of description, or ages of demonstration.

We are again wandering. Our readers perhaps may not have seen much consistency in ~~our~~ the remarks we have already made with the motto which heads the present paper. Their dulness we cannot help. Our intention is to consider

a branch of human inconsistency, which we see occurring every day, but which we fear would require much to eradicate it.

Almost every man is content, in a great degree, with the powers of mind, and the capability of enjoyment, nature has bestowed on him. The fool is "wise in his own conceits," and the wise man contemplates his own conscious excellence with rather too much complacency to be discontented with his mind. It is a happy circumstance, that every man thinks himself wiser than his neighbors; that his own opinions outweigh in his mind all the opinions of all mankind, if they are contrary to them. And we may consider it as a wise arrangement of Providence that such should be the case. Were all men aspiring after what they could not be; had they all perceptions of their own deficiency & of the superiority of others, the smile of complacency, of hope,

of joy, would wither into blackness. Envy would "twine her baneful nightshade" over every prospect of life, and carry her triumphs into the very citadel of being. The inmost recesses of the heart, the finest & most distant fibres, would tremble with her desolating presence. She would palsy every generous thrill that woke to sympathy & enjoyment: Gloom black as Egyptian darkness would settle on the human mind; the exertions of intellect would be suspended; malevolence & distrust would reign with unbounded sway; and all that is estimable in character, lovely in affection, bright in sympathy, would vanish from the earth, not, like Pallas, in the form of the bird of Jove, winging their aspiring flight to better realms, but overwhelmed and darkened by shadows, whose blackness and whose intensity would not allow one glimmer of hope to break the monotony of moral annihilation.

Happy then are men that they are contented in general with their intellectual condition. But, with their accustomed inconsistency, their station in life, their possessions, & a thousand other external circumstances, are a fertile source of discontent. They are displeased at every dispensation of providence. They see neither beauty nor harmony in the disposal of human affairs. No situation is without its disquietudes. The poor man longs for wealth, and the rich man trembles for its loss. The unsuccessfully ambitious looks with envy on the pinnacle of his hopes; while the being who has attained that eminence so coveted, would often be tempted to exchange his perilous situation for peace, tranquillity, & repose.

Are we backward in believing all this? — Let us ask our own bosoms candidly, & they will tell us how true it is. They will tell us how often we have sighed for situa-

ations we could not possess, how often we have repined at the wise allotment of heaven. Good fortune neither diminishes the cravings of our discontent, nor does misfortune increase them. The happiest, the loftiest stations of life have owned the awful truth. Misery and grandeur, depression, & elevation, sorrow & joy, have alike acknowledged its reality.

——— The cottager, & king,
He whom sea-sever'd realms obey, & he
Who steals his whole dominion from the waste,
Repelling winter blasts with mud & straw,
Disquieted alike, drew sigh for sigh,
In fate so distant, in complaint so near.*

——— Ah! Man, 'frail and feverish being of an hour', uncertain wanderer here on earth, why art thou so restless, so wavering, so inconsistent, so discontented? Is every thing on earth so dark

* Young's Night Thoughts — the complaint, Night 7.

and dreary, so unsatisfactory to the mind, as to keep thee in a continual state of misery? In thy cup of woe, has providence mingled no sweets? Seek not to search through those mys-terious dispensations, which baffle hu-man reason. The mists that envelop the majesty of God and the designs of his wisdom, mortal eye can never pierce. Shall perishable clay dare to arraign the doings of the Infinite One? Shall misguided reason pre-sume to dictate to Him who is allwise, all powerful?

Much as these questions may startle us, such things are done every day. Poets have sung of contentment, and dreamers have had visions of quiet happiness;- but have they ever ex-perienced it? Have they not the next moment arraigned at the frail & fallible bar of human reason the actions of the Supreme? The Macedonian conqueror wept when he had atchieved the conquest of a world, that no more remained

for him to vanquish;— and the same thing in principle is done every day by every human being.

We sometimes imagine, that could we be let into the secret designs of providence in life, we should be able to endure patiently without a murmur, & to go on contented and at ease. But no;— we should be the same, — we should be ~~worse~~ even worse. We should be tempted to question the propriety of the course providence might take, and our discontents, instead of being alleviated, would vex us with still greater violence.

If we wish then to be contented as well with what we have as what we are, how are we to effect it? If it be so desirable an object, have no means been discovered whereby man may live uninterrupted and undisturbed by the turbulence of discontent? Alas! all human systems have failed. The mightiest schemes of

mere human philosophy have proved no better than the "idiot's dream." The boast of intellect, the pride of learning, the pomp of reason, have confessed themselves baffled in their search for contented happiness. All that has been delightful in theory, beautiful to the imagination, plausible to superficial observation, has been proved to be but "dust in the balance," when brought into actual practice. The voice of ages tells the solemn tale; the records of the past, the scenes of the present, exhibit but the same account; and the future must remain as antiquity has been.

If we were left to human reason alone, we should be indeed in a lamentable state. But, blessed be God! there is a brighter revelation from above. There is a sacred volume which can point out the way to ~~man~~ "lovely, "lasting peace of mind." — Resplen-

dent as the roseate hues of morn, and far more lasting, a light beams down from the empyrean regions to light man, "poor wanderer on a stormy way," to the path to happiness and quietude. The purified vision of the former murmurer, sees all distinct and clear. The mists of doubt roll away, and the heart, renovated and enlarged, looks up to God as the source of all happiness, the giver of every good and perfect gift. The spirit, clad in immortal armor, trembles no longer amid the turbulent billows of life. The murmur of disquietude is hushed for ever. Present ill is accounted only as the prelude to future good; the imperfect and often marred enjoyments of earth as a slight and sad foretaste of those eternal pleasures, which can never fade, in heaven.

Mortality, at best, is a sad and feverish state of being. But when there is a means of rising

above the storms of sorrow, and the pangs of disappointment; of conquering moody discontent, and ineffectual desires for what we cannot possess; of acquiring all the consistency of character a mortal being can attain; — why should we go on, blindly and waywardly pursuing the light of our own minds, which in its happiest effulgence, is but faint & glimmering as it were amid the vapors of thick darkness? — If we can repress those wishes which

"wildly rolling, vanish quiet;" *

why not attempt it? If religion be such a sweetly soothing power, let us rise from our dust, shake off our chains, and implore Him who knows our hearts, and sees all their weakness, to pity our infirmities, and pour upon our minds his reviving influence.

* Dyer.

Let the Sceptic continue to arraign that wisdom which he cannot comprehend, and call in question the being of a God whose attributes he can form no idea of. Let him continue to repine at the order of the universe, and heap his invectives on the arrangement of its parts. Let the ambitious, the avaricious, and the worldling, continue their unavailing murmurings at disappointments their own folly and their own crimes have procured for them; and live still disquieted at every trifle, dissatisfied with every allotment of providence, loathing every enjoyment, yet ardently craving for other gratifications. Let these all go on in the career their madness has pointed out. – The Christian proceeds through life in triumph. The shafts of envy, of malice, of disappointment, fall harmless from his

heaven-bestowed mail. There is no terror in his eye, no shrinking in his heart. In joy or in sorrow, in light or in darkness, in prosperity or in adversity, he is still the same. He murmurs at nothing; is resigned to all that may befal him in life.

Into his feelings the men of the world cannot enter. They may deride, but they cannot be like him, unless they likewise seek an interest in that atoning blood which can cleanse them from every pollution. Washed in that, the scales of doubt and mis-apprehension fall from their eyes, and they stand ~~forth~~ forth emancipated from the bondage in which they were held, "regenerated, & redeemed."—

"Calm as clear evenings after vernal rains,
When all the air a rich perfume retains,
Their minds, all doubt & murmurs
driven away,
Feels Truth's full force, and bows every
Religion's sway;

Tread from the bonds that held them down before
On purer wings their spirits upward soar,
Catch the ethereal spark in heaven that burns,
And hail the light that to their minds returns;
Bear every portion given them by the sky,
Contented live, & unepining die!

Altered from John Scott.

E.